

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep Harry Mitchell released the following statement today announcing that after meeting with, speaking to and hearing from tens of thousands of Arizonans in his district, he intends to vote for health care reform and fixes beneficial to Arizona being considered by reconciliation:

"Through a year of debate and studying several bills, I have heard from health care professionals, insurers, patients, and tens of thousands of passionate and concerned Arizonans both for and against reform.

"One thing has been made clear. We cannot sustain the path we are on because health care costs are burdening Arizona families, hurting the economy and slowing the recovery. While not perfect, the reconciliation package addresses several of the concerns I had with the Senate bill. It closes the prescription drug donut hole for seniors, helps to mitigate the impact of Medicaid costs on Arizona, and eliminates special deals like the Cornhusker Kickback. Whether one supports or opposes the underlying bill, I believe a vote to block these fixes is irresponsible. These fixes help Arizona and I strenuously urge the Senate to adopt them.

"This package would ban insurance companies from denying people with pre-existing conditions, set up a free-market exchange that allows insurance companies to compete across state lines, strengthen Medicare, and ensure that small business owners and individuals have access to affordable plans. Additionally, it would rein in costs and reduce the deficit.

"While I have been heartened by the many thoughtful questions, comments and suggestions I have received, I have also been extremely disappointed by much of the extremist rhetoric and blatantly false statements that some have injected into this discussion. The jarring use of imagery such as hanging people in effigy or the use of swastikas is appalling. It does not add to a serious civil discussion, nor does it respect the memory of the millions of Holocaust victims who died at the hands of evil. Our Democracy is better than that.

"The package does not contain so-called "death panels" or government takeovers of health care, and it will not dismantle the private insurance industry. It does not allow federal dollars to fund abortion or provide coverage for illegal immigrants. If it did, I would not vote for it.

"And make no mistake, the state's decision to kick kids off state health insurance, risk billions in federal matching funds and kill over 42,000 jobs is not a recipe for economic recovery. The state of Arizona had a fiscal crisis before this bill and decisions like that will keep it mired in one without it. I believe the Governor and the state legislature need to spend more time getting our state's fiscal house in order, and less time blaming others for the problems they are exacerbating by putting their politics ahead of the people they were elected to serve."